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ABSTRACT

Effective group leadership is not entirely about "good" or "bad" approaches, but rather the ability to choose an appropriate style for a particular situation. This paper examines three paradigms, or world views, that can influence the approach of a leader (facilitator, therapist, teacher) of adventure groups and gives examples of how elements of adventure-based counseling and therapy programs might be influenced by each paradigm. Typical ways of thinking and values are outlined for each of three social paradigms, or perspectives on the world. Positivism embraces linear cause and effect thinking, abstractions, generalized models, and expert solutions. Interpretivism emphasizes the need to understand meaning ascribed to phenomena by others and sees reality as dependent on social interaction and negotiation. The critical perspective holds that conflict is inevitable within social systems because power is unequally distributed. The potential effects of each paradigm on program elements are described and illustrated with regard to the needs of individual participants, group dynamics, the role of the leader, and group status in relation to contextual requirements. Flexibility and the ability to empathize with clients are key features of effective leadership in the adventure therapy field. Methodological diversity is desirable, and working from one world view should not exclude the understanding and use of another. (Contains 12 references.) (SV)

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Choosing Your Style: Approaches to Leading Adventure Therapy Programmes

By John Pickard

Introduction

Adventure therapy practitioners can be said to use adventurous experiences as a catalyst for personal and social change. For the purposes of this paper, the role practitioners take when they work with these change processes is that of a leader. Leadership can encompass a wide variety of styles. Effective leadership is not entirely about "good" and "bad" approaches. It is also about the ability to choose an appropriate style for a particular situation. For example, a leadership style may be quite appropriate in one situation, but be completely inappropriate in another. In my experience, adventure therapy practitioners often tend to fall into a pattern of using one or two familiar leadership styles throughout all their work. The use of these preferred styles can "fly in the face" of situational constraints and opportunities, thereby potentially limiting the achievement of desired outcomes.

In this paper I will explore some of the paradigms and variables that can influence a leader's choice of approach during an adventure therapy programme. In addition, I will give examples to help demonstrate the variety of influences that can arise during an adventure-based intervention. I hope that this paper will assist readers towards a greater understanding of the complexities associated with choosing an appropriate leadership style. I also hope that readers will gain an understanding of the variables that can influence their ability to lead groups effectively.

Paradigms

In his recent book, *The Web of Life A New Synthesis of Mind and Matter*, Fritjof Capra describes "The dramatic changes of thinking that happened in physics at the beginning of this century" (p. 5). He suggests that these changes "... led Thomas Kuhn to the notion of a scientific paradigm, defined as "a constellation of achievements - concepts, values, techniques, etc. - shared by a scientific community and used by that

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community to define legitimate problems and solutions" (Kuhn, 1962; quoted in Capra, 1996, p. 5)

Capra then goes on to define "...a social paradigm ... as 'a constellation of concepts, values, perceptions, and practices shared by a community, which forms a particular vision of reality that is the basis of the way the community organises itself' " (Capra, 1986; quoted in Capra, 1996, pp. 5-6). Others (Checkland, 1981; Flood & Jackson, 1991) have described paradigms as "worldviews", which is a term derived from a German descriptor "Weltanschauung". In this paper I will use the terms "worldview" and "paradigm" interchangeably.

In this section of the paper I will outline three paradigms that I feel help to describe underlying aspects of leadership and that can inform leadership practices. These worldviews can also assist practitioners to understand how and why other factors influence their work as leaders. The term "leader" is used here in its broadest sense, and it is intended that the term "leader" will encompass the roles of facilitator, teacher, consultant, therapist, and so on. The worldviews that will be described are the interpretivist, positivist, and critical perspective.

Positivist perspective.

> The [positivist] paradigm that is now receding has dominated our culture for several hundred years, during which it has shaped our modern Western society and has significantly influenced the rest of the world. This paradigm consists of a number of entrenched ideas and values, among them the view of the universe as a mechanical system composed of elementary building-blocks, the view of the human body as a machine, the view of life in society as a competitive struggle for existence, the belief in unlimited material progress to be achieved through economic and technological growth, and ... the belief that a society in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male is one that follows the basic law of nature. (Capra, 1996, p. 6)

Positivism embraces linear cause and effect thinking in which wholes are conceived of as being no more than the sum of their parts.

Subscribers to positivistic thinking probably have a "tendency to create the abstractions of separate objects, including a separate self, and then to believe that they belong to an objective, independently existing reality" (Capra, 1996, p. 287). As a result, positivist's hold that the only valid forms of knowledge are those that are derived from objective, scientific-like inquiry. That is, positivists argue that objective observation will lead to objective and verifiable facts as well as the ability to develop law-like generalisations about the world. Consequently, "...the social world tends to be broken down into manageable packages: social class, racial prejudice, religiosity, leadership style, aggression, and so on" (Bryman, 1988, p. 22). "Thus one ends up with theories of juvenile delinquency, racial prejudice, bureaucracy in organisations, and so on" (Bryman, 1988, p. 19).

In general terms then, leaders of adventure therapy interventions who display positivistic tendencies may, for example, tend to work mainly with observable behaviours, the rational and logical, generalised models and theories derived from qualitative research, and with individuals rather than with social systems. Practitioners with a positivistic bent probably see that they are experts who should prescribe solutions

for clients. For example, behavioural and psychological sciences have emerged from this paradigm. Table 1 summarises many characteristics of the positivist paradigm.

Table 1
Thinking and Values of Positivism

THINKING	VALUES
rational	expansion
logical analysis	competition
linear	quantitative understanding
theories formulated as generalisations	domination
Hypotheses deduced from theory & tested empirically	anthropocentricism (human-centred)
	prediction & control
reduction of problems (restriction of contextual variables)	precise definitions
	values free - objectivity
reliability & validity of experimental instruments	generalizability of findings/laws

Note: Table compiled from Capra, 1996 and Gallagher, 1984

Interpretive perspective.

Interpretivism emphasises the need to understand meaning ascribed to phenomena by others. (Bryman, 1988) From this perspective, reality is seen to be dependent on ones' beliefs and interpretations. Indeed, reality is also seen as a by-product of social interaction and negotiation. Therefore, meanings do not have independent and objective existence, and reality is determined by our relationships with others and more generally, with the world.

Consequently, it cannot be assumed that we can objectively identify 'social facts' without reference to the purposes, meanings and understandings ascribed to a situation by those immersed in it. As Capra (1996) points out,

> Cognition, then, is not a representation of an independently exiting world, but rather a continual bringing forth of a world through the process of living. The interactions of a living system with its environment are cognitive interactions, and the process of living itself is a process of cognition (p. 260).

Therefore, reality can be seen as an emergent property of social negotiation and interaction with the world. Capra goes on to say (1996), this paradigm does

> ...not maintain that there is a void out there, out of which we create matter. There is a material world, but it does not have any predetermined features. ...There are no objectively existing structures; there is no predefined territory of which we can make a map - the map-making itself brings forth the features of the territory" (p. 264).

Therefore, in this paradigm,

> ... living systems cannot be understood in terms of the properties of its parts. Systems science shows that living systems cannot be understood by analysis. The properties of the parts are not intrinsic properties, but can be understood only within the context of the larger whole. Thus systems thinking is 'contextual' thinking.... What we call a part is merely a pattern in an inseparable web of

> relationships. Therefore, the shift from the parts to the whole can also be seen as a shift from objects to relationships. (Capra, 1996, p. 37)

A fundamental belief of this paradigm is that understanding involves an "... express commitment to viewing events, action, norms, values, etc. from the perspective of ...[others]" (Bryman, 1988, p. 61). Similarly, in order to understand reality one must exhibit,

> ... A preference for contextualism in its commitment to understanding events, behaviour, etc. in their context. [This] ... is almost inseparable from another theme ...[of interpretivism], namely holism which entails an undertaking to ...[understand] social entities - schools, tribes, firms, slums, delinquent groups, communities, or whatever - as wholes to be explicated and understood in their entirety. The implications of the themes of contextualism and holism ...engender a style of ...[thinking] in which the meanings that people ascribe to their own and others' behaviours have to be set in the context of the values, practices, and underlying structures of the appropriate entity (be it a school or slum) as well as the multiple perceptions that pervade that entity. (Bryman, 1988, p. 64)

Adventure therapy practitioners who subscribe to the interpretivist paradigm may tend, in general terms, to utilise a systems perspective (eg family systems theory; Gestalt psychology; etc), work with social groups rather than individuals, to want to explore the specific context of an intervention, and they will probably attempt to share power and negotiate to develop meaning with their clients. Table 2 summarises many characteristics of the interpretivist paradigm.

Table 2
Thinking & Values of Interpretivism

THINKING	VALUES
Intuitive	conservation
synthesis	cooperation
holistic/systemic	quality
non-linear	biocentrism
identification of interconnections	partnership
understanding of values, actions, &	qualitative understanding
concerns	observation & description
subjectivity of process recognised	avoidance of pre-definitions
contextual	practical experimentalism
	context-specific understanding

Note: Table compiled from Capra, 1996 and Gallagher, 1984

Critical perspective.

The critical perspective aims "... to critique the status quo, through the exposure of what are believed to be deep-seated, structural contradictions within social systems, and thereby to transform these alienating and restrictive social conditions" (Orlikowski, Baroudi, 1991, p. 6). An underlying belief of this philosophy is that people can be and in fact are coerced by social, economic, political, and cultural authority.

The critical perspective holds that conflict is inevitable within social systems because power is unequally distributed. This perspective also maintains that individual values, beliefs and interests tend to be "...oppositional and contradictory" (Flood & Jackson, 1991, p. 13). Therefore, conflict and coercion are legitimate tools for creating social change, and "...'genuine' compromise is not possible" between involved parties. (Flood & Jackson, 1991, p. 35) Systemic change is therefore seen to be both desirable and necessary.

In the context of critical theory, leaders of adventure therapy interventions are likely to become actively involved with changing the status-quo both, with or on behalf of their clients, or for other purposes as they see fit. In general terms, the critical perspective has found application in areas such as youth work, family therapy, and justice systems. Table 3 summarises many characteristics of the critical paradigm.

Table 3: *Thinking & Values of the Critical Paradigm*

THINKING	VALUES
identification and understanding of	achieving maximum potential
power-relations important	personal/ factional power and control
pursuit of power ongoing	human well-being & emancipation
assert personal/factional values & beliefs	liberation
struggle to resolve conflicts &	equality
divergences	freedom
coercive, competitive, conflicting	subversion of restrictive paradigms
relationships 'normal'	

Note: Table compiled from Flood & Jackson, 1991; Checkland, 1981)

Inter-Relationships between Paradigms.

Figure 1 shows how group leaders can use this model to map the paradigmatic underpinning of an intervention at any moment in time. If it is assumed that the sides of the triangle represent continuums between the three paradigms, then leaders can develop a triangulated plot to indicate the current status quo of the intervention. In Figure 1 the leader has been plotted in a central location, which indicates that interpretivist, positivist and critical paradigms are having a roughly equal influence on the leader at that point in time.

Central Elements in the Interaction with Paradigms

Positivist, Interpretive, and critical perspective can be relevant to individual participants in an adventure therapy programme, to the group, to the leader, and to the context of the program. The Individual participants are the people for whom the adventure therapy programme is designed to benefit. In this category we are concerned with individual perceptions, attitudes, values, beliefs, behaviours and assumptions. The group refers to the collective dynamic of a group of individual participants. A programme may be designed to meet the collective needs of a group. As such, this category encompasses the combination of perceptions, norms, values, attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and assumptions for a group. It represents the totality of group interaction and action, reflection and observation. This role of leader may vary throughout an intervention, and

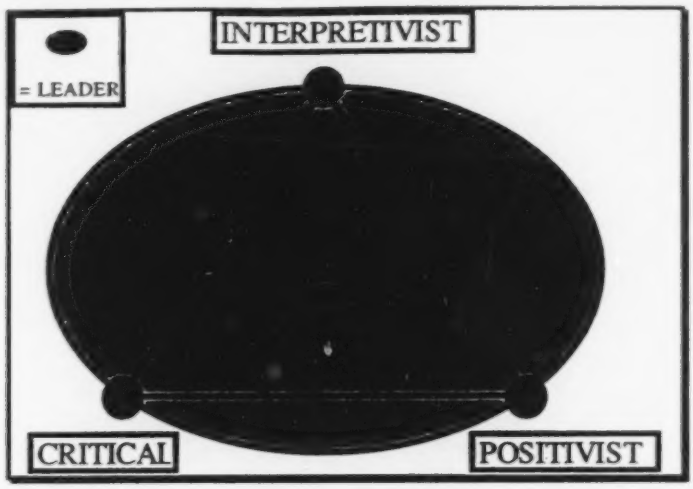

Figure 1. Interacting between Positivist, Interpretivist, and Critical Paradigm.

in fact, may be held simultaneously by several group-members. Leaders are characterised by their ability to influence individuals and/or the group. For example, a formally appointed facilitator, trainer, or therapist may fill the role of leader. In addition, this role may be filled by a group-member as the situation demands. The context is represented by external factors to an adventure therapy intervention, which have the ability to influence but not control the nature, extent, and outcomes of the programme. For example, the context may include financial constraints, political mandates, and social expectations. It may also include natural and/or constructed environments. These central elements can be seen to interact to create a specific situation. There will be overlap and duplication between variables. Therefore, it is through the interplay of all variables that a situation is defined. In the following diagram (Figure 2) the hatched area represents the situation.

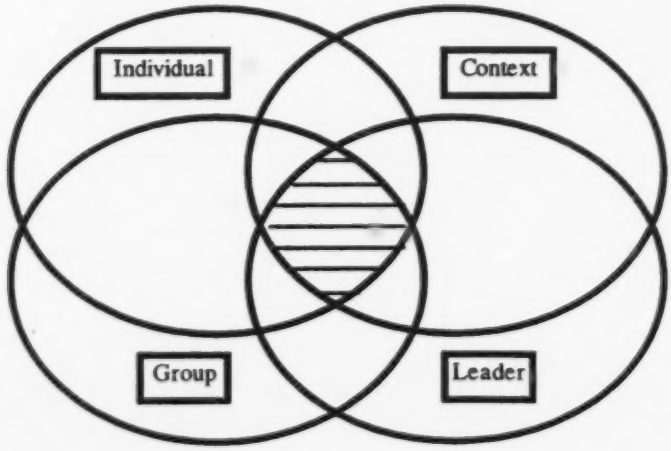

Figure 2. The Interaction between the central elements in the adventure process.

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Relationships: Paradigms and Variables

Using the notion of paradigms and situational variables, as described above, it is possible to generate a useful model that examines how central elements are shaped and influenced by each paradigm. Table 4 summarises the dimensions that result from such an examination.

Table 4.
Interaction between Central Elements and Paradigms

PARADIGMS	CENTRAL ELEMENTS			
	Individual Participant (IP)	Group (G)	Leader (L)	Context CX)
Positivist (P)	P - IP	P - G	P - L	P - CX
Interpretivist (IN)	IN - IP	IN - G	IN - L	IN - CX
Critical (C)	C - IP	C - G	C - L	C - CX

Relationship between positivism and central elements.

P – IP: In a positivist framework, individual participants perceive that their individual needs must be met at all costs. Serious conflict can erupt in the group because of irreconcilable, divergent, and/or contradictory individual understandings, purposes and goals. Power is often used to achieve individual ends in the group. Individual participants may expect the leader to show expertise and to prescribe solutions without a great deal of consultation with them. They will probably also search for objective facts, generalised theories and models to work with.

For example, a young participant in a rehabilitative adventure-based programme ran off into the bush after the leader confronted her for hitting another group-member during an activity. Rather than listening to how her behaviour had impacted on other members of the group (a more interpretive stance) the girl argued that the other person had "deserved it" (being hit) because she had "got it wrong" (the activity).

In another example, a participant in an experiential group exercise was able to acknowledge needing help in order to complete the activity. This acknowledgment served as a powerful metaphor for the participant because he realised that he needed to seek expert help in order to resolve his drug dependency.

P – G: Groups that subscribe to positivist beliefs may have oppositional and contradictory interests, and irreconcilable conflict is a real possibility. Power imbalances, conflict, and adversarial relationships can exist and/or develop. Groups may well turn to "experts" to assist them to mediate and resolve disputes and conflicts that arise.

For example, during a bushwalk with nine "at risk" young people, two distinct factions emerged. Two boys wanted to walk by themselves, well away from the main group. The rest of the group felt a need to keep the whole group together and within visual contact. An attempt by the main group to resolve this issue paralysed the group

with conflict. The group expected the leader to resolve the conflict by "laying down the law" in a prescriptive fashion.

Consequently, positivism can generate a group climate that values expertise as well as symbols and behaviours associated with individual power and prestige. For example, a participant in a rock-climbing activity gained credibility and influence within her group because she was the only person to complete a challenging climb.

In this dimension groups are also likely to value logical thinking, objectivity, and activities that emphasise individual rather than group achievement.

P – L: In his treatise on facilitation John Heron (1989) describes the relationship between positivism and leadership as the "hierarchical mode" (p. 16) of group leadership. He goes on to say that:

> Here you, the facilitator, direct the learning process, exercise your power over it, and do things for the group: you lead from the front by thinking and acting on behalf of the group. You decide on the objectives of the programme, interpret and give meaning, challenge resistances, manage group feelings, provide structures for learning and honour the claims of authentic behaviour in the group. You take full responsibility, in charge of all major decisions on all dimensions of the learning process. (p. 16)

Thus, the leader sees their role as that of an expert, and they attempt to characterise individuals, the group and the context in terms of objectively defined laws, models and theories (Searight, 1989; p. 1). In addition, the leader imparts logical, factual knowledge, and seeks to explain phenomena in objective terms. As an expert, the leader prescribes the purpose, nature and extent of the intervention. Leaders "...can ...[therefore] take satisfaction in an accurate diagnosis independent of its wider meaning for the ...[group]." (Kirmayer, 1994; p. 197)

For example, during a safety briefing for a rock-climbing activity a leader prescribed one, and only one way of belaying safely. There was no opportunity for negotiation: this safety boundary was firmly fixed. In another example, a facilitator assumed that an individual participant was lying because there was no observable evidence to suggest that their claims were true.

P –CX: in a positivist context the broader context of the intervention dictates what outcomes are required from the intervention, and how these outcomes must be achieved. The context is fixed: individual participants, the leader and the group may need to change in order to further align themselves with the context.

For example, a group of adjudicated offenders, in the context of the law, may be required to demonstrate behavioural and attitudinal change as a result of an intervention. In addition, the courts may require that offenders be constantly held in a secure environment, and that only certain activities and processes be used. In this example, neither the leader, individual group members, nor the group are in a position to negotiate or question these contextual requirements.

Relationship between interpretivism and central elements.

IN—IP: In an interpretivist framework, individual participants believe that social reality is constructed, and will attempt to engage the leader as well as others in the group in dialogue in order to develop a shared understanding about the nature of phenomena.

For example, the experience that an individual participant has on a ropes-course can influence the way that other group-members think about and behave towards the ropes-

course experience. Joe, a participant in a ropes-course activity, seemed to find the activity easy. In fact, he chose to do several activities with his eyes shut. When he completed the activity Joe spent time encouraging and supporting other individuals to follow suite, making comments like: "Its not really hard..." and "go for it - it's OK!" By the end of the ropes course session several other individuals from the group had adopted this worldview.

IN—G: Interpretivist groups tend to acknowledge those individual realities may be divergent or different, but that a collectively constructed reality is both possible and desirable. Therefore, conflict, discussion and dialogue are all constructive mechanisms for achieving understanding within a group. Groups will attempt to use power relations that support these processes.

For example, a group who had just successfully completed a complex problem-solving exercise developed a group 'story' about their success, and the reasons for that success. Hero figures were identified, and with time, the story became rich in imagery and symbolism.

IN—L: John Heron (1989) describes the relationship between group leadership and interpretivism well.

> Here you share your power over the learning process and manage the different dimensions *with* the group: you enable and guide the group to become more self-directing in the various forms of learning by conferring with them. You prompt and help group members to decide on the programme, to give meaning to experiences, to do their own confrontation, and so on. In this process, you share your own view which, though influential, is not final but one among many. Outcomes are always negotiated. You collaborate with the members of the group in devising the learning process: your facilitation is co-operative. (p. 17)

The leader believes that the "...[c]onsciousness, motivation, intention, and self-preservation [of the group] are not fixed states to be measured and determined once and for all; they are the result of shifting processes of adaptation, of interpersonal negotiation and of rhetorical stance." (Kirmayer, 1994, p. 196) Therefore, the leader is interested in the perspective's of group-members, the relationships between group-members, and the relationships between the group and the context (Maseide, 1991; p. 545). Leaders with an interpretivist bias prefer to use a "...strategy which is relatively open and unstructured, rather than one which has decided in advance precisely what ought to be ...[covered] and how it should be done. It is also often argued that an open ... strategy enhances the opportunity of coming across entirely unexpected issues which may be of interest...." (Bryman, 1988; p. 67)

For example, a leader who has an interpretive philosophy will use debriefs as an opportunity to discuss and debate outcomes and processes with the group. These leaders will probably add their perspective to those generated by the group, but they will not attempt to tell the group how and what it should think. This approach, it is though, reduces the likelihood that people are simply responding to "...experimentally induced stimuli." (Bryman, 1988; p. 59)

IN—CX: The interpretivist context of an intervention is supportive of the idea of individual and collective construction of meaning. In order to generate meaningful information it is important to understand and account for the context. More specifically, an interpretivist context allows for and is supportive of dialogue, debate and conflict at all levels.

For example, a group of leaders from a large camp facility may have divergent views on the utility of an internal procedure. It is in the interests of the overall facility (part of

the broader context) that they reach mutually satisfactory solutions to issues and concerns. Otherwise, the organisation runs the risk of becoming hamstrung through infighting and conflict.

Relationship between Critical Paradigm & Variables.

C – IP: Individual participants will critically reflect on the nature and extent of power relations in the group and in the overall context. They will focus their attention on attempting to free themselves of oppressive and restrictive constraints. Serious conflict is a valid process, especially when it leads to desired changes in the status quo. Thus, individuals may, either alone or through a group examine and challenge what they consider to be oppressive power relations that affect individuals from that group.

For example, during a "train the trainer" workshop about facilitation a participant challenged the leader's authority by stating: "I haven't learned anything here. I don't believe you are old enough or experienced enough to have anything worthwhile to offer me. I'm going."

C – G: The critical group will seek to identify and remove power imbalances and sources of inequality so that the group can gain autonomy. This may involve challenges to fundamental group structures and processes, to individuals within the group, to the leader, and/or to the context. Heron (1989) notes that there "...is ...[an] obvious distinction between individual autonomy and group autonomy. They can be at odds: what I choose may conflict with the consensus choice among my self-directed peers, who thus become my controlling hierarchs, directing my action. Therefore, group autonomy does not necessarily guarantee the autonomy of every one of its members." (p. 20) For example, a family group may become involved in an adventure therapy intervention that aims to work with issues of equality and power that exist within their family system.

C – L: The critical leader works with individuals and the group to develop and support equitable power relations and autonomy. The leader aims to divulge power to individuals and the group so as to support their ultimate autonomy. John Heron (1989) calls this the autonomous mode of facilitation, and describes it as follows.

> Here you respect the total autonomy of the group: you do not do things for them, or with them, but give them freedom to find their *own way*, exercising their own judgement without any intervention on your part. Without any reminders, guidance or assistance, they evolve their programme, give meaning to what is going on, find ways of confronting their avoidances, and so on. The bedrock of learning is unprompted, self-directed practice, and here you give space for it. This does not mean the abdication of responsibility. It is the subtle art of creating conditions within which people can exercise full self-determination in their learning. (p. 17)

For example, the leader of an experiential group set up a process whereby the group conducted a self-directed action-learning project. Group members took responsibility for choosing a project, determining how to complete the project, completing the project, and assessing the outcomes of the project.

C – CX: The context is supportive of the critical approach, and is fully open to change. Significant change to structures and/or processes associated with the context is possible and can be desirable. For example, in the context of significant power imbalances (eg emotional abuse) in a participant's family system, the desired outcome of

an intervention might be to increase the participants' ability to remove themselves from the context.

Synthesis

As a "perfect" leader you would perhaps be able to respond with empathic flexibly to the varying demands of individual group-members, the group itself, and the overall context. In this paper it is contended that flexibility and the ability to empathise with our clients are both key features of effective leadership in the field of adventure therapy. This implies that leaders must develop the ability to understand and work within different paradigms.

For example, Kirmayer (1994) identifies a need for flexible, empathic leadership from professionals in the healing professions:

> The desire to have professionals provide and legitimate specific meanings exists in tension with the patient's need for self-authorship, for choosing specific meanings and, even more, for keeping a flexible and rich store of rhetorical resources available to manage the twists and turns of everyday life with symptoms and illness. Each medical diagnosis reduces chaos and offers specific metaphors for symptom experience but it also constricts meanings and constrains self-authorship. (p. 203)

Clearly then, there are situations which will support, if not demand a particular response from a leader. Leaders, on the other hand, bring their own paradigms to such situations. Therefore, leaders need to understand and respond appropriately to the paradigmatic frameworks that shape and influence situational variables associated with an intervention. Understanding situational variables can inform a leader's practice and allow them to respond to them in a way that will contribute to the success of the programme. In conclusion, Heron (1989) argues that leadership "...style ... transcends rules and principles of practice, although it takes them into account and is guided by them. There are good and bad methods of ...[leading] any given group, but there is no one right and proper method. There are innumerable valid approaches, each bearing the signature of different, idiosyncratic ...[leaders]." (p. 21)

Conclusion

In this paper I have attempted to explain why "...methodological diversity" (Searight, 1989; p. 14) is desirable, and how working from one worldview should not exclude the understanding and use of another. Therefore, the purpose of this paper has not been to develop a model that will prescribe the use of different approaches in differing situations. Rather, my intention has been to develop a framework that will inform the thinking and practices of leaders in the field of adventure therapy.

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